

Good Seed Sunday

Devotionals

Put together with the help of resources from Jay Ewing, Monica Tang, Chris Wright and Queenie Hewitt. All Bible passages are in New International Version (NIV).

Let us read and reflect about God's Creation, the work of Jesus and our role as keepers of God's Earth.

Day 1

How did God create our world?

Genesis 1:1-20

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. (v3)

And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." (v6)

And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let the dry ground appear." (v9)

And God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. (v.11)

And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night..." (v14)

And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." (v20)

And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." (v26)

Psalms 24:1-2

¹ The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;

² for he founded it on the seas
and established it on the waters.

Before God created us, humans, he created the earth full of light, water, land and animals. Then God gave us plants and tree fruit for food. How does it feel to say to say all of Creation is God's property? What do we think is still ours'?

Day 2

God's Good Creation

The end of Genesis 1:31 says, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." (NIV)

In fact, in the whole creation story, "good" is repeated 7 times. In Hebrew literature if a word or a phrase is repeated, it intentionally implies importance. Here, "good" refers to "beauty and peace". So, what God had made, He declares "good" - it is full of beauty and peace, without a hint of violence or brokenness. This is creation as intended; it is interdependent, sustainable, and beautiful.

*Read Genesis 1:1-31 again, find where God said 'good' 7 times.
As a group, let's take turn reading out these verses.*

Take a look around us, and praise God for what he created, call out what you notice as God's creation and say it is good. Bless them in our prayers, that they may be fruitful and increase in number.

*For example, "God created the soil, this land, it is good!"
"Thank you God for _____, it is good!"*

Day 3

We are made in the image of God.

Genesis 1:26-28

26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, **so that** they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Genesis 2:15

The LORD GOD took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

We were created in God's image. Therefore, we are meant to reflect His nature. The creation of humans is not independent of His command to take care of the earth. Rather, He created us in His image *to* care for the earth. We cannot separate our existence from the act of caring for the rest of existence. We can conclude then, that we are expected to rule over creation *as God would* since we are created in His image. (Ewing, J. 2015)

In the same way when God says 'Let us make mankind in our image....and let them rule over the other creatures', the first is what enables and equips us to do the second. That is the way the NIV® 2011 translates: 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish....' (Wright, C. 2015)

In the *Message*, which is the Bible reworded in contemporary language, Eugene Peterson translates this verse as, "**God spoke: 'Let us make human**

beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, and, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of

Note the meaning of 'To work the garden and take care of it'. The Hebrew words are "abad": to work, serve, worship, cultivate; "shamar": to keep, watch, preserve, guard, protect)

We are different than all other creatures in the way that we are created in God's Image. Can you think of ways humans use this special ability to rule over the earth? In good ways, and not so good ways?

Day 4

Sin and brokenness in our world.

Genesis 3:16-19

16 To the woman he said,

"I will make your pains in childbearing very severe;
with painful labor you will give birth to children.

Your desire will be for your husband,
and he will rule over you."

17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from
the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,'

"Cursed is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat food from it
all the days of your life.

18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
and you will eat the plants of the field.

19 By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return."

Later in the Genesis account, when Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit, sin (an act that breaks relationship with God) enters the world. In Adam and Eve's disobedient act, three key relationships, upon which the whole created order depends, were severed:

- (1) the relationship between God and us,
- (2) the relationship between us and others, and
- (3) the relationship between us and God's created world.

When we talk about the fall of creation, we often refer to the first two and neglect the significance of the third. However, the first sin of humankind was an act of environmental degradation! From that point, each environmental transgression added up, compounding upon itself, to this particular point in time where the world scarcely resembles that first garden paradise. (Ewing, J. 2015)

Also see Hosea 4:1-3 for the consequences of sin affecting people and the land.

The Fall changed our relationship with God the Creator and the creation.

Where do we see this brokenness in our own lives, in the village and in society?

How does the lack of plants in the land resemble brokenness?

Day 5

Creation waits to be redeemed.

Romans 8:19-22

¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

What is the connection between the 'children of God' and creation? What is creation waiting for? What does Paul mean when we receive redemption of our bodies, what impact will it have on creation?

Day 6

Reconciliation and good news for all.

Colossians 1: 15-20

¹⁵The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Ultimately, Jesus' resurrection is the first fruit of the new creation, which is to come. In Colossians 1 we are told that Jesus came to reconcile all things to himself "...whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." Reconciling simply means that He is restoring all three of the broken relationships that were severed by Adam and Eve. We are told in Revelation that the final completion of this restoration will occur when Jesus comes again. (Ewing, J. 2015)

Also see Luke 4:16-21

Have you thought of Jesus in this way before? Share with us how you may view the 'Gospel' differently? As Christ followers how are we demonstrating Jesus' resurrection in our reconciliation and restoration efforts?

Day 7

On earth as it is in heaven. God to dwell with us.

Revelation 21:1-5

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

The Bible's final great dynamic movement (Rev. 21-22) is not of us all going off up to heaven, but of God coming down here, bringing the city of God, establishing the re-unification of heaven and earth as his dwelling place with us forever. Three times the loud voice from the throne of God says 'with mankind, ... with them, ... with them'.

We should remember that Immanuel does not mean 'Us with God', but 'God with us'. We do not go somewhere else to be with God; God comes to earth to be with us - as the Psalmists and prophets had prophesied and prayed for. 'O that you would rend the heavens and come down!' (Isa. 64:1). (Wright, C. 2015)

Let us pray the Lord's Prayer and when we get to the line "on earth as it is in heaven" let us pray with God's vision of no more pain and brokenness.

⁹ "Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,

¹⁰ your kingdom come,
your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.'

Matthew 6:9-13

Day 8

Praise the Lord!

Psalm 104

¹ Praise the Lord, my soul.

Lord my God, you are very great;
you are clothed with splendor
and majesty.

² The Lord wraps himself in light as
with a garment;

he stretches out the heavens like
a tent

³ and lays the beams of his upper
chambers on their waters.

He makes the clouds his chariot
and rides on the wings of the
wind.

⁴ He makes winds his messengers,
flames of fire his servants.

⁵ He set the earth on its
foundations;
it can never be moved.

⁶ You covered it with the watery
depths as with a garment;
the waters stood above the
mountains.

⁷ But at your rebuke the waters fled,
at the sound of your thunder they
took to flight;

⁸ they flowed over the mountains,
they went down into the valleys,
to the place you assigned for
them.

⁹ You set a boundary they cannot

cross;

never again will they cover the
earth.

¹⁰ He makes springs pour water into
the ravines;

it flows between the mountains.

¹¹ They give water to all the beasts
of the field;

the wild donkeys quench their
thirst.

¹² The birds of the sky nest by the
waters;

they sing among the branches.

¹³ He waters the mountains from his
upper chambers;

the land is satisfied by the fruit of
his work.

¹⁴ He makes grass grow for the
cattle,

and plants for people to
cultivate—

bringing forth food from the
earth:

¹⁵ wine that gladdens human hearts,
oil to make their faces shine,
and bread that sustains their
hearts.

¹⁶ The trees of the Lord are well
watered,

the cedars of Lebanon that he
planted.

¹⁷ There the birds make their nests;
the stork has its home in the

junipers.

18 The high mountains belong to
the wild goats;
the crags are a refuge for the
hyrax.

19 He made the moon to mark the
seasons,
and the sun knows when to go
down.

20 You bring darkness, it becomes
night,
and all the beasts of the
forest prowl.

21 The lions roar for their prey
and seek their food from God.

22 The sun rises, and they steal
away;
they return and lie down in their
dens.

23 Then people go out to their work,
to their labor until evening.

24 How many are your works, Lord!
In wisdom you made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.

25 There is the sea, vast and
spacious,
teeming with creatures beyond
number—
living things both large and small.

26 There the ships go to and fro,
and Leviathan, which you formed
to frolic there.

27 All creatures look to you
to give them their food at the
proper time.

28 When you give it to them,
they gather it up;
when you open your hand,
they are satisfied with good
things.

29 When you hide your face,
they are terrified;
when you take away their breath,
they die and return to the dust.

30 When you send your Spirit,
they are created,
and you renew the face of the
ground.

31 May the glory of the Lord endure
forever;

may the Lord rejoice in his works—

32 he who looks at the earth, and it
trembles,
who touches the mountains, and
they smoke.

33 I will sing to the Lord all my life;
I will sing praise to my God as
long as I live.

34 May my meditation be pleasing
to him,
as I rejoice in the Lord.

35 But may sinners vanish from the
earth
and the wicked be no more.
Praise the Lord, my soul.
Praise the Lord.

Conclusion:

Ecological action now is both a creational responsibility from the Bible's beginning, and also an eschatological sign of the Bible's ending -- and new beginning. Christian ecological action points towards and anticipates the restoration of our proper status and function in creation. It is to behave as we were originally created to, and as we shall one day be fully redeemed for.

The earth is waiting with eager longing for the revealing of its appointed kings and priests -redeemed humanity glorifying God in the temple of renewed creation under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Day 9

Loving people and caring for creation.

Matthew 22:26-40

³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

John 3.16,

"God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (NIV)

We usually interpret this verse you would think it said, "For God so loved *humanity*," or even the "*individual*," but it does not. It says, "For God so loved the *world*." In the original Greek, the word "world" is closer to "cosmos", or "entire universe." Jesus was sent for the sake of the entire created world. (Ewing, J. 2015)

How do we love our neighbors as ourselves through caring for God's Creation?

Day 10

God the Farmer

Psalm 65: 9-13

You care for the land and water it;
you enrich it abundantly.

The streams of God are filled with water
to provide the people with grain,
for so you have ordained it.

10 You drench its furrows and level its ridges;
you soften it with showers and bless its crops.

11 You crown the year with your bounty,
and your carts overflow with abundance.

12 The grasslands of the wilderness overflow;
the hills are clothed with gladness.

13 The meadows are covered with flocks
and the valleys are mantled with grain;
they shout for joy and sing.

We experience God's grace with every raindrop and food that comes from the ground. Do we see God's abundance, despite our lack of care to the earth?

Pray that we do not take advantage of God's care for the earth, and neglect our duty to care in a way that honors God

